



Principles of Grant Writing

Research and Sponsored Programs

1/12/2015

Good Proposal = Good Idea + Good Plan



Do you know....

- What you want to do and why you want to do it?
- If it will work?
- If you can do?
- If it matters to anybody else?

Can you communicate...

- Why this project is needed and what you want to accomplish?
- Who will carry out the project?
- How much will it cost?

Request for Proposal (RFP)

- Read carefully and follow directions to the letter
- Don't miss deadlines for letter of intent and proposal submission
- Always attend bidders conferences if offered
- Begin first by creating an outline based on the RFP

Institutional Protocols

- Who can commit to conduct project?
- Who is authorized to approve budget?
- Who else gets involved?
- What happens if you get funded?
- Can you REALLY do what you are proposing?

Essential Components of a Good Proposal



-
- Cover sheet and Table of Contents
 - Summary
 - Introduction
 - Program Narrative, including:
 - Problem Statement/Needs Assessment
 - Objectives
 - Methods / Workplan
 - Evaluation
 - Future/Other Funding
 - Budget and Budget Justification
 - Letters of Support and/or Commitment

Grant Proposal - Components



Cover Sheet

- Federal 424 Form
- State
- Make your own if appropriate

Table of Contents

- This is the last thing you will do before you sign the document

If the RFP has a required cover sheet, you must use it.

(Executive) Summary

- Clearly and concisely summarizes the request.
- Appears at beginning of proposal; written last.
- Identifies the applicant; sentence about credibility
- Includes at least one sentence on problem, objectives, methods.
- Includes total cost, funds already obtained, and amount requested in this proposal
- Is brief (2-3 paragraphs is best!), clear and interesting.

Program Narrative: Lead Agency Description



- Describes applicant's qualifications or credibility or background
- Who are you: the agency and the individuals
- Applicant agency purpose, programs, constituents
- Evidence of past work and accomplishments
- Evidence of ability: knowledge of the field
- Leads logically to the problem statement
- Brief, interesting and free of jargon

What about your organization?



- What do people think about the organization/institution where you work?
- What do funders think about the organization/institution where you work?
- Boilerplate – file and save

Lead Agency Description (More)



- What is organization's mission?
- How is organization positioned in community and what is its heritage?
- How does it benefit the community?
- How and who does it serve?
- Is the organization fiscally sound?
- Does the organization have strong leadership?
- What community partners are involved?

Program Narrative: Community To Be Served



- Community description, including geography, demographics
- Community readiness
- Description of problem and need – why the funding is necessary

Program Narrative: Community Need



Need: Gap between what a situation is and what it should be.

- **Collect information about:**
 - The problem to be addressed
 - Current programs addressing the issue, its successes and challenges
 - Current policies and needed policies

Community Need

- Do you have local or county statistics to add to the Background provided?
- Can the reviewer get a picture of your community and its needs from your proposal?
- What statistics can you provide to show community readiness?

Problem Statement or Needs Assessment



- Documentation of needs to be met or problems to be solved
- Relates to purpose of applicant agency
- Reasonable dimensions – not save the world
- Supported by data, authorities, clients
- Client's needs vs. applicant's needs
- Not "lack of program"
- Factual, specific, brief, compelling case
- Jargon-free and interesting to read

Numbers that Get Noticed

- Seek the strongest statistics
- Showcase the statistics
- Make the numbers noticeable

Problem Statement



- Define the problem in terms of conditions and behaviors, rather than solutions
- Define the problem in terms of environmental conditions and behaviors that affect it; avoid assigning blame
- Write preliminary statement that everyone can agree on, such as “Male tobacco users in our community are not using the Quitline.””

Program Objectives

- Establish measurable benefits of funding
- At least one objective per problem or need
- Outcomes, not methods
- States how those served will benefit
- States time by which change will occur
- Should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART).

What about Process Objectives?



- Process objectives = tasks to be completed over course of project
- Relates to methods, but NOT the same as methods – focus on results

Linking Outcome, Impact and Process Objectives



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- Outcome: By 2010, CVH mortality among men will be reduced by 5%, as measured by annual vital statistics.
 - Impact: By 2010, tobacco use among men will be reduced by 30%, as measured by annual BRFSS.
 - Process: By 2010, use of Quitline among men will be increased by 75%, as measured by Quitline statistics.

Project Action Plan

- Goal
- Objective
- Projects
 - By dates
 - Key Activities
 - Milestones
 - Who will do what – Responsible staff – volunteer, organization.

Methods

- Activities to be employed to achieve results
- Flow from problems and objectives
- Clearly describes program activities
- States reasons for selection of activities
- Describes sequencing, staffing and level of effort.

Linking Objectives & Methods



- Outcome: Reduce CVH mortality
- Impact: Reduce tobacco use
- Process: Increase use of Quitline
- Methods:
 - Conduct professional education programs
 - Conduct media campaign
 - Provide marketing materials to appropriate venues

Evaluation



- Plan for determining degree to which objectives are met and methods are followed:
 - Plan to measure progress toward objectives
 - Plan for evaluating & modifying methods
 - Criteria for success & how data collected
 - Test instruments, data analysis explained
 - Evaluation reports to be produced

Sustainability Plan



- Plan for continuation beyond grant period.
- Realistic plan for future funding if program is to be continued

Other Funding

- Availability of other resources needed.
- How other funds will be obtained if needed to implement the grant
- Accompanied by letters of commitment

Letters of Support

- Endorsement - not same as commitment
- Limit the number (5)
- Knowledgeable of your work, appreciative of this project
- Address to agency head, not to whom it may concern
- Don't say: in response to your request for letter
- Purpose: to show broad community support

Effective Letters of Commitment



- WHO: Person or agency promising tangible service or asset
- WHAT: One-page letter typed on letterhead, specifying what will be contributed or provided
- WHY: Demonstrate local financial support for project
- WHEN: As soon as methods are outlined
- WHERE: Appendix

Project Budget

Project Budget

- Personnel
- Fringe Benefits
- Travel
- Equipment
- Supplies
- Contractual
- Other
- Total

Budget

- Costs to be met by the funding source and those to be provided by applicant or others
- Use required form if directed
- Same story as program narrative: no surprises
- Specific & detailed: includes all items asked of the funding source
- Include other income or in-kind services, and budget narrative/ justification

B.U.D.G.E.T.



- B**ased on the plan described in application
- U**ndergoes thorough review by all parties
- D**etails the cost of each item
- G**ives reviewers adequate information
- E**asy to follow
- T**akes care of all funding needs (or explains why not)

Budget Narrative



- Vitally important so the reviewer can really understand how you and the community will support your grant.
- All sections must have an explanation that anyone who is totally unfamiliar with you and your organization can understand.

Budget: Matching Funds



Monetary contribution to assist with conduct of project:

- Required amount of non-grant resources that will be spent on this project
- Required at a specific level (e.g., 10%, 3:1 – for this RFP, it's 25%)
- Sometimes must be cash, but not always (Yours may be from a variety of other sources)
- Must be documented in financial reports

Budget: Matching Funds, cont.



How to find funds for matching?

- Probably no “pot” of money for matching
- Talk to your partner organizations
- Talk to funding source to determine flexibility
- Talk to your budget person
 - Can’t use federal funds
 - Can’t match the same money twice
 - Can’t pretend to have matching funds

Additional Components For a Better Proposal



- Cover Letter
- Letterhead stationery
- Signature by high authority
- Table of Contents
 - Outline organization of proposal
 - Number the pages!

Additional Components For a Better Proposal, cont.



- Appendices

- Letters of support/commitment
- Publications by/about your agency
- Detailed info/data not in text
- Resumes/qualifications of project staff
- Admin/organizational location of project

**** Remember definition of an appendix!**

Ways to Improve Your Chances



Avoid unsupported assumptions: Don't ...

- assume funding source knows all about you and your agency.
- say “we believe” or “it is thought” – give supporting evidence/documentation
- describe national scope of problem without documenting it in community served

Ways to Improve Your Chances



Pay attention to details: Do ...

- Be sure your topic is appropriate for support
- Be specific about purpose, products, past work
- Be reasonable: budget ~ work proposed
- Include letters of commitment for promises made by others

Ways to Improve Your Chances



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- Make your proposal meet the funder's needs
 - Project benefit to many people
 - Display novel approach, cutting-edge
 - Collaborate!
 - Include target population
 - Make your own investment
 - Demonstrate replicability
 - Promise to disseminate information
 - Demonstrate life after the grant

Ways to Improve Your Chances



Be sure proposal is neat, clean, easy to read:

- No typographical errors
- Original, plus number of copies requested
- Don't use extravagant packaging
- Avoid footnotes; give separate reference list
- Use clear font like 12-point, Times New Roman
- Make important parts stand out
- Organize document so it flows (appendix)

Ways to Improve Your Chances



Improve your writing skills: Do's and Don'ts

- Don't use a committee for writing
- Don't be afraid to personalize
- Don't use contractions or sexist language
- Do aim your pitch at one individual
- Do avoid technical language, acronyms, abbreviations
- Do select title of 10 or less words; don't be cute
- Do be consistent in style and format
- Do keep it short and simple; less than page limit

Ways to Improve Your Chances



- Don't junk the English language
 - Avoid problem words and phrases
 - Avoid bad connections
 - Avoid obese prepositions
 - Avoid useless cabooses
 - Don't take the roundabout way

Ways to Improve Your Chances



Develop a grants-writing dream team

- Team leader
- Skilled writer
- Budget developer
- Literature researcher
- Program experts
- Needs assessment coordinator
- Word processor
- Community key informants/consumers
- Gopher

Wrap Up

- Read instructions and follow them exactly – If they want one inch margins, use one inch margins
- Be specific
- Get it in on time or they won't look at it
- Once funded, complete all requirements on time if you want to be re-funded!